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Montana State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee

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MONTANA SOICC NEWSLETTER

CONTINUING CHALLENGE

A continuing challenge facing education and training institutions is to identify, design, and offer programs that serve both the needs of individual participants and the needs of the economy and society as a whole.

Training programs must be designed to prepare individuals for specific occupations that are realistic in light of anticipated job openings (demand) and the expected number of persons available for and prepared to fill them (supply).

To meet this need, the Job Training Partnership Act (PL 97-300) and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (PL 98-524) have given the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC) the responsibility for coordinating all activity for the development, implementation, and maintenance of an occupational information system (OIS) based on supply and demand data, and to give special attention to the labor market information needs of youths and adults.

The mandated members of the Montana SOICC are:

- Job Service and Training Division, Department of Labor and Industry: represented by T. Gary Curtis, Administrator;
- Rehabilitative Services Division, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services: represented by Bob Donaldson, Administrator;
- Vocational Education Services Department, Office of Public Instruction: represented by Gene Christiaansen, Administrator;
- Business Assistance Division, Department of Commerce: represented by Byron Roberts, Administrator; and
- State Job Training Coordinating Council: represented by T. Gary Curtis.

The Montana SOICC has also expanded its membership to include:

- Centralized Services Division, Department of Labor and Industry, fiscal agent: represented by Rod Sager, Administrator;
- Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, University System: represented by Carrol Krause, Acting Commissioner; and
- Montana Career Information System Advisory Council: represented by Gloria Hermanson.

NEW APPROACHES TO HEALTH CARE

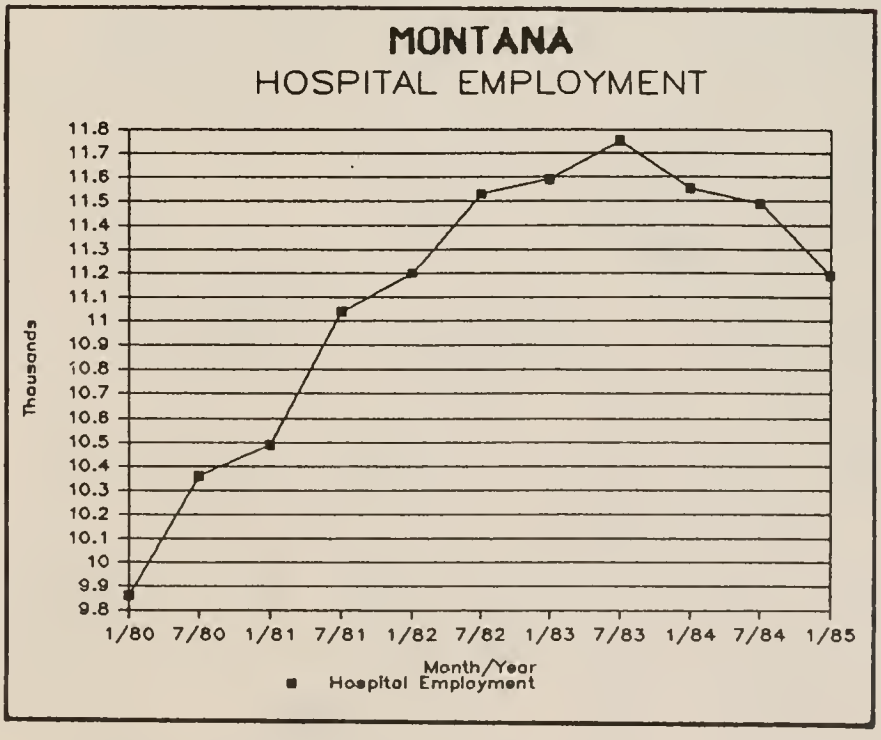
The rapid growth in Montana's health care industry recently came to an abrupt halt. Hospital employment peaked out in July, 1983, and has steadily decreased since that time. Some hospital officials attribute recent layoffs in Billings to the reduction in the number of patients caused by new outpatient surgery services, and changes in federal assistance programs.

Staffing levels have fallen because hospitals are admitting fewer patients, and people are shortening stays in hospitals. Many layoffs of clinical hospital staff appear to be in occupations at lower skill levels, notably licensed practical nurse (LPN), nurse aide, and orderly.

Because every dollar spent on health care means a dollar that cannot be spent on something else, controlling health care spending is likely to be of great concern for years to come. One question career planners and counselors need to ask is, "How will health costs be held down?" The answer to that question will suggest which health occupations will offer the best prospects in the years ahead.

Measures to cut costs will almost certainly lead to a shift in staffing patterns. This could mean the emergence of an all-purpose, "multicompetency" technician, trained to perform the work of several different health technologists. Use of such personnel could permit greater flexibility in staffing and reduce the number of workers on duty.

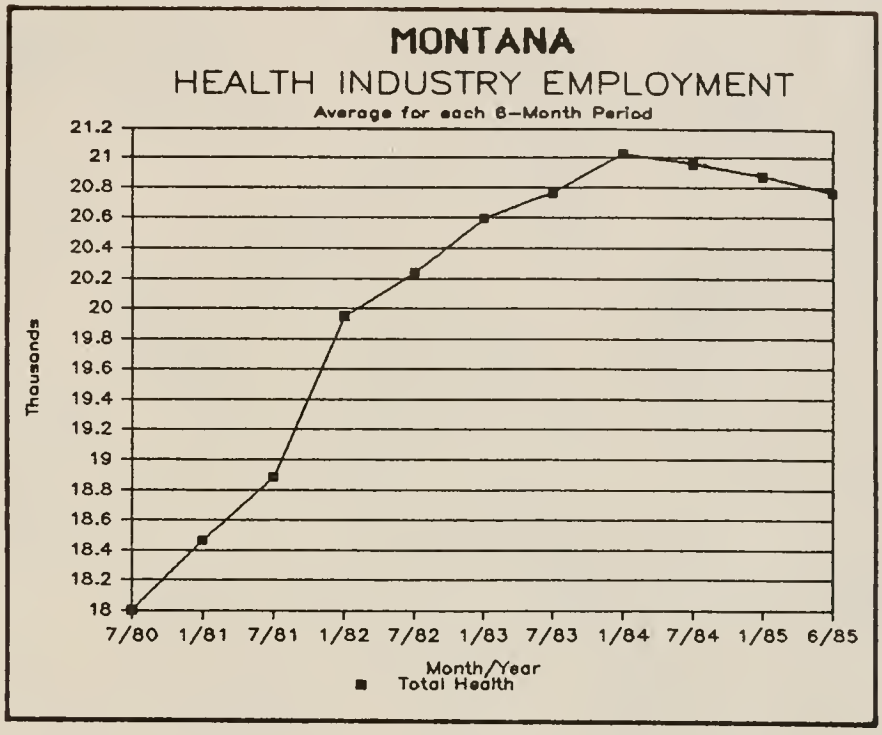
New health delivery systems are taking hold, creating new job opportunities. Among them are emergency centers, birthing centers, and outpatient surgical centers. Private practice by therapists and other health professionals is becoming more common. New approaches to caring for the elderly, sick, and dying are creating new employment settings and job opportunities.



Health promotion for middle-aged and older adults appears to be another growth area. Business firms and hospitals have taken the lead in setting up health education and health screening programs. Concern with exercise and physical fitness will continue to generate jobs in a wide variety of settings.

Due to the health industry's size, people investigating

future job prospects in this industry should be prepared to assess developments as they unfold. Counselors trying to keep up with changes in their own communities will need to strengthen their relationships with local employers and training programs. Continuing contact with hospitals should keep counselors informed on changing needs.



A PARTNERSHIP WITH INDUSTRY

It is time for schools to become much more closely linked with business, especially with small business, and make a greater contribution to the process of creating new jobs.

Industry and business have spent vast sums of money training personnel. Both want to sharpen skills of present employees, to help them learn new technology, and to provide increased opportunities for job advancement. In many cases, specialized training programs are necessary. This may require the establishment of a custom program or a special course to handle the needs of an individual business or industry.

Trade and technical schools are in the best position to develop these programs because they understand private industry, and must be willing to provide programs that will be responsive to the training requirements of business and industry. They must be flexible and willing to make changes in curriculums and programs to meet the needs of the businesses they serve.

For many schools, this represents an opportunity that may not have been clearly defined in the past. Many programs have been geared to training people for entry-level positions, and many schools may not have been aware of the excellent opportunities that exist to develop specialized training programs for existing industry employees or to develop new programs.

Vocational education and job training must be viewed as a continual lifelong process. Employees will be responsible to undertake personal retraining, updating,

and education to keep abreast of current practices, methods, and systems. In order to meet this challenge, occupational schools must form a partnership with business and work with them to meet their needs for the future.

WHERE TO GO AND HOW TO START

The first step should be to develop a list of companies presently employing graduates. Visit these companies and try to arrange meetings with key executives of the company to determine not only how the graduates are doing, but to see whether the institution can help them meet other needs. Invite the business leader to visit the school and see the kind of training provided. Suggestions should be encouraged on what the school can do to help in increasing the skills of the employees of each company.

Consider inviting the local business leader to talk to the student body, to participate as a member of an advisory board, or to address the graduating class. Trade and technical schools are a valuable resource, to not only provide skilled workers to serve the manpower needs of business, but also to develop training programs to train and retrain those already on the job.

Consider a program including the following:

1. Identify the needs of the industries served.
2. Customize programs to serve these industries.
3. Satisfy the employers who hire graduates.
4. Develop materials that will supplement current training programs of the businesses served.
5. Develop cost-effective training programs.
6. Serve as consultants to business and industry and let business and industry serve as consultants in turn.

A partnership with industry is the wave of the future. Get started now.

Source: Career Training, Journal of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Montana ranks fourth in land size, but ranks 44th in population in the U.S. In 1982 there were 571,000 working age Montanans (ages 18-64).

Kate Kahle, Editor
Montana SOICC Newsletter
Volume Three - Number Two

Robert N. Arnold, Program Officer
Montana SOICC

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If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, contact the Montana SOICC at P.O. Box 1728, Helena, Montana 59624. The Montana SOICC reserves the right to edit all information submitted.

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